

Chairman, Working Group on Unclassified
Strategic Information

22 April 1957

SA to Ch/G/RR

GRA Contribution to Briefing Paper

1. Attached is the Geographic Research Area contribution to Part II of subject briefing. Part I was delivered to [REDACTED] earlier. FOIAb3b

2. The geographic contribution is limited by the fact that much information in this field is considered to be unclassified by the Soviets themselves. The technical subjects of geodesy, gravimetry, photogrammetry, and mapping provide more material suitable for the briefing, but are themselves limited by the fact that an organized U.S. concern in these matters is too recent in origin for there to have been developed a sizable body of pertinent data and examples.

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GEOGRAPHIC RESEARCH AREA

Material for I. Introductory Statement

A. It might be fairly stated that this government's interest in identifying those elements of unclassified information on the United States whose control might be advisable stemmed from the grave difficulties encountered by our intelligence agencies in securing basic facts on the USSR. Though the unavailability of information on the USSR is not wholly the result of top policy decision, it provides a good example of how well foreign intelligence interests can be frustrated by denying them information that normally is unclassified. The United States thus feels pressure in this matter primarily in response to the great contrast in the intelligence advantages enjoyed by each.

The CIA has had a keen interest in this problem as it relates to geodetic and gravimetric data -- information which is of key importance in the development of accuracy in mapping, missile systems, and certain aspects of satellite research -- and has informally joined other agencies in studying the feasibility of instituting a policy of quid pro quo exchange in this field. The problem of maps and charts, per se, was examined by a

Task Force of the Interdepartmental Advisory Committee on Publications (IACP) on 13 April 1956. The problem of gravimetric and geodetic data was reviewed by a working group of U.S. defense mapping agencies in November 1956 and is of direct interest to an ad hoc working group of IAC agencies concerned with intelligence aspects of the IGY.

B. With the exception of specifically classified maps and aerial photography, all geographical data and publications on the United States are freely available to the USSR or procurable without much difficulty. Army Map Service maps larger than the scale of 1:500,000 are restricted to the extent that they require special request. However, all such maps as well as unclassified geographical publications are obtainable by the Russians through one device or another.

In contrast, a considerable amount of Russian geographical materials are specifically denied or unavailable to the United States. The recent increase in "take" does not apply to aerial photography, topographic and special-subject mapping, or geodetic and gravimetric data; these in the USSR are classified materials. The increase in availability of other geographic subjects is very limited, and reflects improvement in the simple mechanics of publishing rather than the removal of earlier restrictions. Detailed studies which in the United States represent unclassified monographs or doctoral theses are mostly limited in the USSR to subjects according with State planning and thus continue to be automatically classified.

C. Except for relatively rare instances, U.S. geographical materials are subject to little or no pre-publication control. On the other hand, Soviet materials are, wherever possible, subject to effective pre-publication screening and control through long-developed regulations and control mechanisms. Dissemination of certain non-published materials is restricted to official use by a rigid accounting and transmittal system.

Published geodetic data and large-scale maps and charts are excluded from exchange by the USSR through (1) export controls, (2) screening of sales to Soviet non-nationals at retail centers, and (3) written pre-purchase application requiring full identification of purchasers and a justification for such purchase request. The completely uncontrolled availability of U.S. geodetic data and cartographic products prior to World War II and the known Soviet collection of these means that a substantial, vital amount is now held by the USSR. U.S. data have been utilized in the determination of the Soviet ellipsoid of reference in the Soviet geodetic system, but Soviet geodetic data are not available to the U.S. Army Map Service in its requirement for a similar improved ellipsoid of reference.

D. Seventy-five percent of U.S. geographic intelligence on the USSR is obtained from open sources. Guidebooks, telephone directories, atlases, and encyclopedias together make it possible to develop studies of moderate accuracy and detail. Unclassified technological information in the fields of geodesy,

gravimetry, and photographic instrumentation is of considerable interest to us, but its value is limited by its very limited availability.

Soviet intelligence can apply a low priority to the collection of background data because it enjoys free access to a multitude of corroborative sources whose results provide, as often as not, the ultimate synthesis and evaluation that is required. There is clear evidence, however, of priority effort by the Russians to obtain such hardware as the Worden Gravimeter and associated technical books in the fields of mapping, geophysics, and photogrammetry. The Soviets have developed an elaborate abstracting service which systematically examines all U.S. and other free-world geodetic literature (Journal of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, Surveying and Mapping, the Military Engineer, etc.).

As far back as the 1930's, the Soviets already had a large map collection containing U.S. maps. Analyses of a recent Soviet world atlas reveals a careful and detailed use of topographic maps, aeronautical charts, city plans and road maps. The USSR constantly collects information, which is openly procurable, on U.S. foreign aid plans which incorporate aerial photo coverage and topographic map production, particularly of countries adjacent to the Soviet Bloc.